

INTRODUCTION

2 Corinthians 10:10 introduces tonight's message. If you could've heard the apostle Paul preach, you probably imagine that it would be eloquent, dynamic, outstanding—the greatest preacher who ever lived—but I think you may be wrong. Paul was not that dynamic a preacher, and the Bible tells us that. You want to know what they said about his preaching? Look at 2 Corinthians 10:10.

In fact, Paul admits this himself. "For some say his letters are weighty and forceful. But in person, he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing." (2 Corinthians 10:10).

It's been said that the human brain is an amazing organ. It starts working the moment you're born and doesn't stop until you stand up to speak. And tonight we're going to learn that the apostle Paul had a rough time with public speaking.

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 (NIV). "When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power."

During Paul's time, Greek oratory was at its height. Greek orator Demosthenes was not a good speaker. His elocution teacher told him to go down to the seashore, fill his mouth with rocks, and stand at the seashore and learn to speak above the surf and remove one rock at a time. That training helped Demosthenes become an eloquent speaker.

One little boy who heard that said, "What's an orator?" And the teacher said, "It's kind of like a preacher today." And so somebody asked the little boy how you become a preacher, and he said, "You fill your mouth full of marbles and stand in the shower and practice talking, and you remove one marble at a time. And when you lose all your marbles, then you're a preacher."

I want to talk to you tonight about what it takes to be effective for God. Verse 1 says, "I didn't come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you" that word, proclaimed, just simply means to share. To speak. And every believer is to be a preacher in that sense. You may not stand behind a pulpit and communicate the gospel, but you communicate the gospel perhaps through music, in a Sunday school class, to your family, to your friends. We are all to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

And I am a pastor who preaches, and some of you preach. You just may not have a pulpit and a church where all could be used to the Lord.

The principles about how to be effective for God apply to any kind of Christian service, whether you're preaching from a pulpit or to one person, or in a nursery. Whatever the area, these principles will apply.

I. WHAT YOU DON'T NEED TO BE EFFECTIVE FOR GOD

These are the qualities you do NOT need to be effective for God. And I say this because when some people are asked to serve the Lord, or when we stand up here and we say you need to get involved in a Sunday school class teaching, these are some of the excuses people give. "I can't do this. I don't have these qualities."

A. You don't have to be a super speaker

I'm going to share with you three things that you do not need to be effective for God. Number one, you do not need to be a super speaker. The apostle Paul, who was mightily used of God, was self-admittedly a poor speaker. He said, "I did not come to you with eloquence....My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words."

I honestly believe that if you had heard the apostle Paul preach, you would have gone away saying, "Now that was pretty nice, but I'd sure like to hear Apollos preach. He really rings my bell." Paul wasn't that great a speaker.

Whether we're teaching Sunday school or sharing the gospel one-on-one, we need to subscribe to the KISS theory of communication: Keep It Short and Simple, or at least Keep It Short, Stupid. Something like that. Someone once said biscuits and sermons are both improved with a little bit of shortening. I'm going to try to do that tonight.

You don't have to be eloquent to be remembered. In 1863 they were dedicating the cemetery at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The main speaker was a popular orator named Edward Everett, and he spoke for 50 minutes non-stop. When he finished, the audience applauded. And then President Abraham Lincoln stood up and shared some remarks he had scribbled on the back of an envelope. He spoke exactly 266 words, which took all of 90 seconds. And when he finished, the audience was totally silent.

Which of those two messages are remembered today? Edward Everett's 50-minute sermon or Abraham Lincoln's 90-second speech? That's what the apostle Paul is saying, and that's what I'm trying to share with you tonight. You do not have to be a super speaker to be used of God. In fact, if there's a mistake we make today, it's that we try to make the gospel too complicated.

Did you know that the average preacher speaks about 250 words a minute? I've heard some speak at 300 with gusts up to 400. But if I speak for 30 minutes, or if you teach a Sunday school class for 30 minutes, at 250 words a minute, that means you're going to share 7,500 words. The Ten Commandments only contain 297 words. The story of the Prodigal Son only contained 504 words. The message Peter preached at Pentecost was comprised of only 553 words. On the other hand, our federal government has issued a directive to regulate the price of cabbage, and it contains 26,000 words.

Those things that are most memorable are not the longest. You don't have to be a super speaker.

B. You don't have to be super-smart

Paul said, "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words." (vs. 4) You don't have to be super smart to teach a Sunday school class or to share your faith one-on-one.

There are a lot of preachers who like to use double-jointed, obtuse, 16-cylinder words, and we must remember that Jesus didn't tell us to feed his giraffes, but to feed his sheep. And I'm constantly trying to make it simple.

I've spoken at several seminaries and several colleges to ministerial students, and when I'm there, I usually share this little paraphrase, "Jesus came into the coast, to the theological seminary. He asked the theologians, saying, 'Whom do men say that I, the son of man, am?' Some said You are Jeremiah or Elijah, John the Baptist or one of the prophets. And He said unto the theologians, 'But whom do you say that I am?' And they said, 'Thou art the ground of being. Thou are the prolectic ontological incarnation. Thou art the unphrasable, unverbalyzed, existential, unpropositional encountered with infinitude of inherently subjective experience.'" And Jesus said unto them, 'Huh?'" You don't have to be super smart to be used of God.

I shared with you the last, or a couple of weeks ago, about D.L. Moody. That uneducated, ungrammatical man who was used mightily of God. There was another man who preached earlier in this century, Billy Sunday. Billy was an ex-baseball player. He was a rounder, a reprobate, a wicked kind of guy, but he got gloriously converted and started preaching. He wasn't a smart guy. And the antics that he used were really amazing. Sometimes he would get so wound up, he would stand on the pulpit and do a backwards somersault to illustrate repentance or break a wooden chair over the pulpit.

In some of his meetings, he would stand up and he would say, "I'm so depressed, I'm so discouraged, I've had it, I'm going to end it all." He would pull a revolver out of his pocket, hold it to his head, and pull the trigger and fall to the floor. Women would be screaming and fainting. Men would rush up to his side, and people would keep the men away. He would lie there motionless for about five minutes, and then he would stand up and give a monologue as if he had died and gone to hell. He used some unorthodox methods.

Don't worry, I'm not going to do any of that stuff.

This is a true eyewitness encounter. One time he was giving the invitation, and he would ask people to come down and shake his hand to accept Jesus Christ. And one man came down with a long gray beard, and Billy Sunday was always kind of mischievous anyway, so he reached out and took that man's beard instead of his hand and went "Toot, toot!" right there during the invitation. That's just the kind of guy he was.

But it is said that Billy Sunday led over one million people to Jesus Christ. He wasn't very smart or wise, but God used him.

C. You don't have to be a super-socializer

Paul said, "I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling." (vs. 3) Paul didn't have a gregarious kind of personality. He just loved Jesus so much that it just came out.

And so some of you may be saying, "I can't serve God because I can't speak. I'm not smart enough. I don't have that kind of personality that is extroverted." You don't need those things to be used of God. In fact, I believe sometimes those things stand in the way of being used of God.

Several years ago I went back to a church I had pastored in Alabama to play in a golf tournament. And while I was pastor there, I led a certain man in that town to Christ and baptized him. It was one of those glorious kinds of conversion experiences that everybody thought this man would never get saved, and he accepted Jesus. But I left, and he didn't like the next pastor. And this guy dropped out of church altogether and went back to drinking beer.

And I was on the golf course that day, and a friend of mine said, "Hey David, there's one of your converts right there," and pointed him out and told me about him. And I shook my head and said, "He must be one of my converts because he's certainly not one of Jesus' converts."

It might have been something about my friendliness to him that brought him to Christ. But that won't keep people from coming to Christ. So you don't have to be extroverted. You don't have to be a guy that jumps around and hugs everybody's neck. Paul wasn't, and God used him mightily. Those are the things you DON'T need.

II. WHAT YOU NEED TO BE EFFECTIVE FOR GOD

Paul gives us three elements that we need to be useful and effective for God.

A. An emphasis on the cross

Paul said, "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." (vs. 2) If you want to be used of God, you must make an emphasis on the cross. Talk about the cross. Sing about the cross. Teach about the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Some time ago, several of our church members were on a vacation and went to see the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. And I've never seen it, but they said there are beautiful pictures in the stained-glass windows of the Mormon Tabernacle, and one of the sharp BYU students was serving as a guide and was showing them around. And this guide was giving them information about all the different stages of the life of Jesus.

They came to the portion of the window that pictured Jesus dying on the cross, and the guide spent about five minutes at every other stop, here he simply said, "This is the crucifixion. We don't make much of the cross. Let's move on to the burial." And these folks said they wanted to

shout, "Wait a minute! You don't make much of the cross?"

The cross is the center and the focus of our message. If you know what Mormons really teach and really believe, they are wonderful people. Great commercials. Good basketball players. Great emphasis on the family. But they don't teach the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross for salvation.

I thought, "My soul, how sad it is for a group of people who call themselves Christians to say that they don't make much of the cross."

We make much of the cross. We have two ordinances in our church. That what we just witnessed is a picture of the cross, the death and the burial and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We died to self. That is a picture of the cross. And when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, it is to remind us of the death of Jesus, the blood that is shed, pictured by the juice in the cup. His body that was broken, pictured by the bread that we eat. The cross is central to our ministry and our message.

Paul said, "That's the only thing I wanted to know among you." That's what you need, an emphasis on the cross.

B. An anointing of the Spirit

The second thing you need is the anointing of the Spirit. "My message any my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power." (vs. 4) Now that word, "power," is the word *dynamos*. We get our words "dynamite" and "dynamo" from that. And Paul is saying, "Listen, I can't speak eloquently. I don't have a lot of intelligence. But there is one thing I depend upon, and it is the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit."

Whatever area of ministry you are in, whether you're singing a solo, singing in the choir, playing an instrument, keeping babies in the nursery, taking up the offering, greeting guests in the parking lot, whatever it is, you need to do it in the power and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Because anything you do in the flesh counts for zero in heaven. That's what Jesus said. "I am the vine. You are the branches. He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit. For without me, you can do nothing."

Without Him, we can do some things. You can sing without His power. You can preach without His power. You can teach without His power. But when Jesus said, "Without me, you can do nothing," He's saying in heaven's accounting, when you do it in your own strength, it's a big fat zero. It's nothing.

That's why it's so critical that everything you do for the Lord, you do in the anointing and the power of the Spirit.

You know what that word "anointing" means? It comes from the Old Testament. When a king

was to be inaugurated, the high priest would anoint him with oil by pouring it on his head. And that oil was symbolic of the Holy Spirit totally covering that person.

When I was in college, I read a little book by R.A. Torrey called *Ministry and Work of the Holy Spirit*. That book opened up my mind and my heart to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And I realized that up until that time, I had been trying to preach, but without the power of the Holy Spirit. At the time I was just a freshman in college and I made a commitment, that I would never again try to preach without the filling of the Holy Spirit.

I was one of these youth evangelists. I wore a white suit and white shoes and navy blue shirt and white tie. And I'd preach at these weekend youth revivals. When you preached a weekend youth revival, all you needed were four sermons. Friday night, Saturday night, Sunday morning, Sunday night and I had four stem winders.

I got a call from a pastor in the metropolis of Notasulga, Alabama. That's right down the road from Loachapoka, Alabama. And he said, "David, I hear that you been doing some preaching. I want you to come preach a meeting at our church." And I said, "Yes sir, I'd love to, if I can fit it on my calendar." And it just so happened it coincided with our spring break. And he said, "It's going to be a protracted meeting." And I said, "Fine." After I hung up the phone I wondered what a protracted meeting was. I thought it was like a stewardship meeting or something like that. I didn't know what "protracted" meant.

So I showed up on a Sunday and preached that morning and evening and I said, "I'm doing good. I wonder how long we're going to go?" And then he said, "We're going to go for ten days." I found out that's what protracted means.

I was desperate. I only had four sermons. And I didn't bring any books with me or anything. All I had was my Bible. So I got on my face before the Lord that week, and said, "Lord, I can't do it. I've got these four sermons, and there are 10 services I gotta preach. If you don't do it, it won't get done."

God did it, and I tell you, it was one of the greatest meetings I've ever been a part of. There were more people there every night for 10 nights, and more people got saved. And I learned something that week. I learned that I didn't have to depend upon my "sugar stick sermons" and I didn't have to depend upon my ability to sit down in the library and prepare a polished message. I learned that the power of the Holy Spirit is a lot more effective than our own preparation.

And ever since then, I get on my knees before God before I preach and say, "God, I cannot do it on my own. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit." I say that because there are only certain things I can do. I can share the message, I can inform, I can challenge. But I realize there is a limit to what I can do. I cannot convict anybody of sin. Scary stories may bring fears and sad stories may bring tears, but only the Holy Spirit of God brings conviction. And I just know I can never convict anybody of their sin. Only the Holy Spirit can do that.

I can't draw anyone to Jesus Christ. That is not within human power. That's something only the Holy Spirit can do. I cannot convert anyone. Only the Holy Spirit of God can do that.

Whatever ministry that you're in, if you're not depending upon the power and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, what you're doing accounts for a big fat zero. So what do you need? An emphasis on the cross. You need the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

C. A trust in God's power.

And number three, you need to trust in God's power as opposed to your own human power. Paul says in the first four verses of this passage, "I can't speak well. I'm not very intelligent. I have fear and trembling." He says, "But that's okay because by whatever happens in your life, you'll know that it's not from me." Look at verse 5. Here's the summary of it. "So that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power."

Anything good that's ever done in this world, is not by your power or by your might, but it's by My spirit, says the Lord. God has got to do it if it's worth anything.

There have been wonderful speeches that have motivated people to do wonderful things. We've all heard of or seen the movie about Knute Rockne as he gathers with his football team at halftime, and they're behind, and he concocts some story about one of their players who is dying in the hospital. And then he brings his speech to a fevered climax, and says, "Go out and win one for the Gipper!" Ronald Reagan is in that movie, if you've ever seen it. And then those football players storm out of there and tear up their opponents.

There are certain things that human ability and human wisdom can do to motivate people. But here again it doesn't count for eternity. Who wins a football game doesn't count for eternity. And that's what Paul is saying; anything that really, really lasts comes from God. Not man's power, but God's power.

I've made some bad decisions in my life. One of the worst ones I ever made was when I was in seminary, and I needed a car. I had a motorcycle and my wife had a car she was using to teach school, and I had had a wreck on my motorcycle and sold what was left of it. And I went shopping for a used car. And there were lots of places in Louisville to buy used cars. I recognize that I'm pretty gullible anyway, and I talked to several guys and wasn't very satisfied.

I walked on one car lot, and this man came out to meet me, and he had a pin on his lapel that said, Try God. And I thought, "Yep, this is my man right here." Try God. You can trust this guy. Try God. Nobody would wear a Try God pin unless they love God.

So we got to talking. He said, "I've got just the car for you." He showed me a Fiat sports car. And he told me it had been recently painted. Even the tires had been painted black. He didn't want to show me the engine but I looked at it, and I said, "Is anything wrong with this?" "Oh, no, drives wonderful, it's a good car."

So he sold it to me for \$950. And when you're in seminary, \$950 is \$950. Cindy did not want me to buy it. But you know me. I wanted that car, so I bought it.

It didn't even make it home to Seminary Village. It broke down on the way there. I had to have it towed, and I took it to a mechanic. He looked it and said the engine was blown. So I went back to this guy with the Try God pin and said, "Hey, we got a little problem here." He said, "No, you got a problem." He said, "You signed that as-is warranty, and it's your car." And I thought, Try God my foot. I got to thinking, "This guy talked me into buying this car, and I thought I could trust him." Since then, I've learned that you can't trust everything everybody says just because they have a Try God pin.

So how did this story end? I spent about \$300 trying to get it halfway running, and took it back, and he gave me about \$800 back for it just so I'd quit coming to his office every day and saying, "I want my money back."

Cindy was so good through all that time. I know she was tempted, but she never once said, "I told you not to buy that car." She just cried, and that made it worse. But I learned a lesson: When you put your trust and faith in what a man says, and his fast-talking salesmanship, you can be misled. Sometimes I think people have been led to Christ by slick salesmanship. They've been forced to sign on a line where they never really wanted to sign, and the reason they drop out, because it was something they really didn't want to do.

You can know whenever that happens; it was done on the basis of some man's ability to persuade instead of God's power to convert. Paul said, "I didn't do it in my own strength, but so that God's power would be seen."

I want God to do something around here. I want God to do something in my life. I want God to do something in our church that is so amazing it cannot be explained by any human needs and that cannot be attributed to great preaching, great music, great organization, great staff. It can only be attributed to the power of God.

That's how God can use you. You don't have to be super smart, a super speaker or a super socializer. Just emphasize the cross, trust the power of the Holy Spirit, and depend upon God's power.

OUTLINE

I. WHAT YOU DON'T NEED TO BE EFFECTIVE FOR GOD

- A. You don't have to be a super speaker
- B. You don't have to be super-smart
- C. You don't have to be a super-socializer

II. WHAT YOU NEED TO BE EFFECTIVE FOR GOD

- A. An emphasis on the cross
- B. An anointing of the Spirit
- C. A trust in God's power.

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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